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1. A method of consumer cash value accumulation based upon point-of-sale transactions between consumers and merchants, the method comprising:

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5 a. at the point-of-sale, obtaining from the consumer an account number unique to the consumer;

P1  
P1 b. at a merchant location, determining a credit value for the transaction;

P1  
10 3 c. electronically providing, for each transaction, from the merchant location to a central system the consumer's account number and the credit value;

P1  
15 3 d. for each transaction, accumulating, at the central system, cash value in a consumer account associated with that consumer's account number by increasing the cash value in that consumer account in relation to the credit value.

5 2. The method of claim 1, which further comprises selectively providing to a plurality of the consumers access to funds in their respective consumer accounts, such access being based upon the cash value in that consumer account.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the consumer account number is independent of how the consumer pays for the transaction.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining a credit value for the transaction is based upon the amount of the transaction and the applicable credit rate determined by the merchant.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein access to funds is provided by issuing a check in an amount equal to the cash value in that consumer account.

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6. The method of claim 1 wherein, for each transaction, merchant data associated with the merchant is electronically transmitted to the central system along with the consumer's account number and the credit value, the method further comprising:

for each transaction, accumulating, at the central system, bill value in a merchant account associated with that merchant's merchant data by increasing the bill value in that merchant's account in relation to the credit value.

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7. The method of claim 6 further comprising:  
generating for each merchant account a bill in an amount based upon the bill value in that merchant account.

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8. A centralized consumer cash value system for transaction between consumers and multiple merchants comprising:

at each merchant location at least:

consumer data input means at the point-of-sale for inputting an account number;

processor means for determining a credit value for the transaction; and

first communication means for electronically transmitting to the central system the consumer's account number and the credit value related to each transaction; and

at a central location a central system having at least:

second communication means for electronically receiving the consumer's account number and the credit value related to each transaction; and

consumer account memory means for storing cash values for a plurality of consumer accounts, each consumer account being associated with a respective, unique account number;

processor means for incrementing the cash value in a consumer account associated with a received consumer account number in relation to the received credit value.

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9. The system of claim 8, which further comprises unit means for selectively providing to a plurality of consumers access to funds in an amount based upon the cash value in the consumer account associated with that consumer.

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10. The system of claim 8, further including, at each merchant location, memory means for storing a credit rate selected by the merchant, transaction data input means for inputting the sale amount of the transaction, said merchant location processor means further responsive to said memory means whereby said credit value is determined in accordance with said credit rate and the amount of the transaction.

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11. The system of claim 9, said unit means including a check printer whereby access to funds is by printing a check in the amount of the cash value in that consumer's account.

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12. The system of claim 8 wherein the first communication means also electronically transmits and the second communication means also electronically receives, related to each transaction, merchant data associated with the merchant along with the consumer's account number and the credit value, the central system further having:

merchant account memory means for storing bill values for a plurality of merchant accounts,  
each merchant account being associated with respective merchant data; and

said central system processor means further for incrementing the bill value in a merchant account associated with received merchant data by an amount corresponding to the received credit value.

D1  
13. The system of claim 12, the central system further having:

means for issuing to each merchant a bill in an amount based upon the bill value in the merchant account associated with that merchant.